

The Orthodox Church

What is Orthodoxy?

2 Greek words

1) 'Orthos'

2) 'Doxa'

Orthodox = right belief or true praise

What is the Church?

- 1) Greek word for Church
'Ecclesia' = the called out
- 2) The Church is people not a building
(1st 350 years, Christians did not own Church buildings)

If you are part of the Church, then you have been
“called out of the world.”

- 3) Basic understanding of Church – a people holy and set apart for the Lord

Life of the Early Church

“They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Acts 2:42

- 1) **Apostles teaching-** Teachings handed down by our Lord to the Apostles
- 2) **Fellowship** – The unity of believers
- 3) **Breaking of the bread-** The Eucharist
- 4) **The Prayers-** The Old Testament (Psalms) & Liturgical prayers of the Church

The Ecumenical Councils

- During the first 3 centuries the Church underwent persecutions but kept growing.
- In 312 A.D., Emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as the official religion and he himself became the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire.
- Church flourished through the centuries, but growth led to an increase of differences in ideologies.
- The Church saw it necessary to make definitive statements of what the Church affirms to be as true and not true.

Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)

- **Main Issue/Concern:** Is Christ really divine?
- **Heretic:** Arius, a priest from Alexandria (Egypt)
 - Taught that Jesus was not divine
 - Taught that Jesus was only a created being, and not equal to the Father.
- **Defender:** *St. Alexander*, bishop of Alexandria, and *St. Athanasius the Great*.
 - Church teaches that Jesus is Divine, co-equal with the Father.
 - Drafted original form of Nicene Creed.
- Current churches who fall into the Arian Heresy: Arians, Unitarians, Mormons (Church of Latter Day Saints), Jehovah Witnesses.

Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.)

- **Main Issue/Concern:** Is the Spirit divine?
- **Heretics:** *Macedonians*, also called *Pneumatachians* (spirit-fighters)
 - The Arian controversy continued with people still trying to deny the teaching of the Trinity.
 - By 360 A.D. most people accepted that Jesus was divine, but now started to teach that the Holy Spirit was not Divine, because the Nicene Creed did not stress it.
- **Defender:** St. Gregory the Theologian
 - Taught that the Church believes and confesses that the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son.
 - The paragraph regarding the Holy Spirit was added to the Creed.

Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.)

- **Main Issue/Concern:** Understanding of who St. Mary was
- **Heretic:** *Nestorius*, Patriarch of Constantinople
 - Taught that St. Mary could not be called the Theotokos (God-bearer) or the Mother of God.
 - This heresy distorted the Church's understanding of the person of Jesus Christ
- **Defender:** *St. Cyril*, Patriarch of Alexandria
 - Explained and defended that the Church believes that the Word of God became Incarnate; Jesus Christ is a union of Divinity and Humanity.
 - This teaching is central to the Orthodox Faith because it shows how Jesus both saves and heals mankind.
- Current churches who fall into the Nestorian Heresy: The Assyrian Church of the East, Church of the East, Nestorian Church.

Four Marks of the Church

Church is One

- Church is one because God is one (unity)
- There is one Church, not many; and it is united, not divided

Church is Holy

- Church is holy because God is Holy
- Members of the church are holy because of their communion with God

Church is Catholic

- Catholicity = fullness, perfection, wholeness
- Church is universal, for all of mankind
- Church is Catholic because we participate in God's fullness, divine life
- Christ is present in every parish; cannot add anything, only grow in Him

Church is Apostolic

- The Church is sent; mission
- Christ sent by God, Apostles sent by Christ, Church is sent by Holy Trinity
- The Church has been sent into the world, to bring the world into communion with God